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## NEWS

## President Bacow's First-Day Message

by JOHN S. ROSENBERG

7.2.18



Lawrence S. Bacow

Photograph by Kris Snibbe/Harvard Public Affairs and Communications

THE FORMAL TRANSITION from President Drew Faust to President Lawrence S. Bacow took effect yesterday; this morning, his first business day as Harvard's twenty-ninth president, Bacow sent a personal message to the community.

He began by noting the close relationship he and his wife, Adele, have had with Faust and her husband, Charles Rosenberg, from the beginning of her presidency in 2007 and through the unexpected dimension of the current change in administrations:

Eleven years ago, on July 1, 2007, Adele and I had Drew and Charles over to our home for dinner at Tufts to welcome them as Harvard's first couple. It was Drew's first day as president. We had a wonderful time together discussing the joys and challenges of leading a research university. It was the start of a great friendship.

When Drew announced she would be stepping down, Adele and I again invited her

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and Charles for dinner on July 1, 2018, this time to celebrate Drew's terrific run as Harvard's president. It seemed a fitting bookend to her tenure and a great way to welcome them back to civilian life. While I can't say for sure whether they enjoyed my grilled salmon, I know we all had lots of fun toasting Drew's leadership.

But when we first set the date for our dinner, none of us imagined that we would be marking another occasion—not just the last day of Drew's presidency but the first day of mine.

Turning to the Harvard he now leads, Bacow emphasized a theme that also sounded throughout his Tufts presidency, from 2001 to 2011: the *joint* responsibility that *all* members of the community hold for advancing its common teaching and research mission:

Every one of us who works here plays a role in advancing our academic mission. Collectively, we all help to educate new students and create new knowledge—whether we teach classes or work in a lab, shelve books in the library or maintain our beautiful grounds.

Continuing in the very personal style that was a hallmark of his Tufts tenure (inviting members of that community to join him for morning runs, hosting the entire senior class to dinners at the president's residence), he said, "I have moved into my temporary office at Loeb House while Mass Hall is under renovation. If you see me around campus this summer, please come up and say hello. I want to meet as many of you as possible." (Bacow begins his presidency in a sort of double exile: as Mass Hall is being overhauled, the president's residence, Elmwood, is also being renovated. But as a Corporation member beginning in 2011, he is very familiar with Loeb House, where the governing board holds its meetings; and as a resident of Greater Boston's higher-education circles since he arrived at MIT to enroll as an undergraduate in 1969, he obviously knows the territory well.)

And then he alluded to **one of the compelling challenges that motivated him to accept the Corporation's request that he consider, and ultimately agree to appointment to, the University presidency**: "We live in unusually challenging times—for Harvard and higher education, for the nation and the world." The external challenges to higher education were the central focus of a July 1 **front-page story on the new president in *The Boston Globe*, "Explaining Harvard to the heartland."**

**Drew Faust's opening-day message, on July 2, 2007**, appears here. That day, she invited the community to an afternoon ice-cream social in Harvard Yard—a gathering that was reprised, in a farewell gesture, last Friday afternoon. Given the forecast for a continued heat wave across Massachusetts this afternoon, Bacow's greatest first-day gift to the community he now leads may well be *not* trying to clone that event, so the cohort of faculty and staff members remaining on campus during this holiday week can stay comfortably inside, in air conditioning.

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I trust that President Bacow and our "Inclusion and Belonging" implementer, John Wilson, will be addressing the reality that many hundreds of Harvard's community members are presently disfranchised, most of them not even being enabled receive a message such as is the topic of the above article. Private-contractor custodians, security guards and dining services workers at Harvard are denied a variety of fundamental rights and privileges available to all other categories of community members. They are not permitted to use Harvard's libraries, as just one example. Other than the few who have been given Harvard email addresses by their facility managers, none are receiving even critical messages about emergencies, never mind the routine communications from this university's leaders. Even more so denied are Harvard's temp workers, quite a few of whom are paid only the Massachusetts minimum wage of \$11 per hour, even after many years of service here. Harvard in general has historically had a problem of not proactively taking the steps necessary to ensure that its reality truly matches its leaders' rhetoric and directives. May the rectifying of that be one of President Bacow's legacies.

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